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No. 15-274

In the Supreme Court of the United States

WHOLE WOMAN'S HEALTH, *et al.*,
Petitioners,

v.

JOHN HELLERSTEDT, M.D., COMMISSIONER, TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES, *et al.*,
Respondents.

On Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* PRIESTS FOR LIFE IN SUPPORT OF RESPONDENTS

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STATEMENT OF IDENTITY AND INTERESTS OF *AMICUS CURIAE* PRIESTS FOR LIFE

Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 37, *Amicus Curiae* Priests for Life respectfully submits this brief in support of the respondents, urging the Court to uphold the legitimate state interest of Texas to regulate the abortion industry in order to protect the health, welfare, and safety of its citizens.[1]

Priests for Life is a pro-life organization created to identify, educate, network, encourage, and mobilize Catholic and other Christian clergy and lay people to advance the protection of unborn children from abortion through prayer, education, preaching, teaching, publishing, and other religious methodologies.

To promote its mission, Priests for Life, along with Anglicans for Life, have developed the Silent No More Awareness Campaign ("Silent No More").

Silent No More is a joint project whereby Christians make the public aware of the devastation abortion brings to women and men. The campaign seeks to expose and heal the secrecy and silence surrounding the emotional and physical pain of abortion.

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[1] All parties have consented to the filing of this brief. Correspondence evidencing such consent has been filed with the Clerk of the Court. *Amicus Curiae* Priests for Life further states that no counsel for any party authored this brief in whole or in part, and no counsel or party made a monetary contribution intended to fund the preparation or submission of this brief. No person other than Priests for Life, its members, or its counsel made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief.

The specific goals of Silent No More are as follows:

- To reach out to people hurt after abortion, encouraging them to attend abortion after-care programs.
- To invite those who are ready to break the silence by speaking the truth about abortion's negative consequences and the path to healing.
- To educate the public that abortion is harmful emotionally, physically, and spiritually to women, men, and families, so that it becomes unacceptable for anyone to recommend abortion as a "fix" for a problem pregnancy.
- To share the personal testimonies of hurt and healing to help others avoid the injury and pain caused by abortion.

It is through this Brandeis-style brief that *Amicus Curiae* Priests for Life presents to this Court the compelling testimonies of individuals who have been harmed by the adverse effects of abortion so that those who remain silent in the dark shadow of abortion will remain silent no more.

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

Texas has a compelling interest to protect the health and safety of its citizens, and this includes enacting regulations to raise the standard and quality of care for women seeking abortions. The regulations at issue serve that valid purpose, and they do not place a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion.

In further support of Texas' legitimate state interest to regulate abortion and to promote the health and welfare of women, included in this brief and its appendix are testimonies of victims of abortion from across the country—persons who have been harmed in a profound way by this deadly procedure. These testimonies reveal that regulations like those enacted by Texas are not only valid, they are necessary.

ARGUMENT

I. Texas Has a Legitimate Basis to Regulate Abortion in order to Minimize Its Harmful Effects.

In *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833 (1992), this Court adopted the "undue burden" standard to balance the competing interests at stake in the abortion context. Under that standard, a law violates the Constitution "if its purpose or effect is to place a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability." *Casey*, 505 U.S. at 878. However, as the Court observed, "not all regulations must be deemed unwarranted." *Id.* at 876. "The fact that a law which serves a valid purpose, one not designed to strike at the right itself, has the incidental

effect of making it more difficult or more expensive to procure an abortion cannot be enough to invalidate it." *Id.* at 874.

Unquestionably, a state has a valid, indeed compelling, interest to promote public health and to secure the safety of its citizens, and this includes protecting those who may be harmed by abortion—a procedure that by its very nature is intended to destroy human life. As this Court further acknowledged, states also have a "legitimate goal of protecting the life of the unborn." *Casey*, 505 U.S. at 883.

As the record demonstrates, the stated and valid purpose of the challenged regulations was to raise the standard and quality of care for women seeking abortions and to protect the health and welfare of women seeking abortions.[2] The effect of this law advances this legitimate purpose.

Consequently, as this Court held in *Casey*, even if the challenged regulations make it more difficult or more expensive to procure an abortion, that is no basis to invalidate them. *Casey*, 505 U.S. at 874.

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[2] *See* Senate Comm. on Health & Human Servs., Bill Analysis, Tex. H.B. 2, 83d Leg., 2d C.S. 1 (2013) ("H.B. 2 seeks to increase the health and safety of a woman who chooses to have an abortion by requiring a physician performing or inducing an abortion to have admitting privileges at a hospital and to provide certain information to the woman."); *id.* at 2 ("Moving abortion clinics under the guidelines for ambulatory surgical centers will provide Texas women choosing abortion the highest standard of health care.").

II. The Testimonies of Abortion Victims Demonstrate that More Abortion Regulations Are Needed, not Less.

Proponents of abortion, specifically including those who profit from it, such as the petitioner clinics in this case, often claim that they want abortion to be "safe, legal, and rare." Yet, as this case demonstrates, their paramount concern is to keep abortion "legal," often rejecting any effort by the states to ensure that abortion is truly "safe" and further arguing that any regulation that might have the incidental effect of making abortion "rare" is automatically declared a "substantial obstacle."

Petitioners argue strenuously that *Casey* prevents the states from adopting regulations such as the ones at issue, while *Casey* itself says just the opposite. In sum, Petitioners are incorrect to argue that Texas' commonsense health regulations violate the U.S. Constitution.

Consistent with *Casey* and in further support of a state's legitimate interest to regulate abortion, included in this brief and its appendix is a sampling of the numerous testimonies of victims of abortion from Texas and other states across the country—persons who have been harmed in a profound way by this deadly procedure. *Amicus Curiae* Priests for Life believes it is imperative that this Court hear their voices because these testimonies demonstrate that what is needed is *more* regulations like those enacted by Texas, not less. Striking down Texas' regulations will make it *harder* to protect women such as these. Make no mistake, abortion is not only fatal to the unborn; it is exceedingly harmful to women as these testimonies

vividly illustrate. Because of the harm they suffered, these victims of abortion want to remain silent no more.

SILENT NO MORE TESTIMONIES—TEXAS [3]

Colleen,
Texas, United States

I scheduled a visit to an abortion clinic with my best friend the next week. I was sickly nervous, visibly shaking, and my stomach was very upset. I felt very relieved when the abortion doctor performing my ultra-sound showed me a white speck in my stomach, what he referred to my fetus, and said, this "could" be a pregnancy, but it's too tiny to terminate. "You need to wait several weeks and come back." I felt very relieved that I was told that I could not abort that day. Looking back, it was very unusual, however.

I went back in several weeks later, again with my best friend. I was very sick with morning sickness over those weeks. My boyfriend and I had been getting into horrible fights. I was emotionally a complete wreck and again visibly shaking at the abortion clinic.

During that ultra-sound, only several weeks later, the first doctor told me that I was 16-weeks pregnant, and that since I was into my second trimester the abortion would be more costly and also a more difficult procedure. My exact words were, "I don't understand, I was just here several weeks ago and another doctor

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[3] Additional testimonies of those harmed by abortion can be found in the appendix and at http://www.silentnomoreawareness.org/testimonies/index.aspx.

told me he wasn't even sure I was pregnant, that all he saw was a white 'dot' and to come back." Then I said, clearly and with certainty that I was very uncomfortable with having a more difficult procedure and that I would just have the baby. He looked perplexed and brought in a second doctor who then viewed my ultra-sound and said that I was "12-weeks" and that we could proceed.

I remember that I was one of many girls in the clinic and the expressions on everyone's faces were nothing less than a mixture of intense fear and pain. Everyone was crying. The "feel" in the back room of the clinic was overbearing—a place I could never return. I was so scared when it came to be my turn, I almost threw up, but instead I was shaking. I think I was given a pain-pill, but I don't remember. The procedure was a suction procedure, and it seem[ed] to take what felt like forever. I kept asking "Is it almost over?" I was crying hysterically and a kind woman was holding my hand and telling me that it will be "okay "

I still can't make it through sharing this experience without crying.

The procedure itself felt like intense cramping, and I was in such intense pain immediately following it and on the way home that I believed that there was something wrong with me. I was bleeding huge amounts and on the phone with the clinic for at least a couple days following. They kept assuring me my pain level, bleeding was 'normal.' I did not go to the doctor, or a hospital because first of all, I didn't have the money or insurance to do so and secondly, I did not want to tell anyone about this experience.

I bled in silence basically for almost a month. My relationship with my boyfriend hit rock bottom during that month. I broke up with him a couple of months later and that seemed devastating to him, because I believe he was very much in love with me. I was intensely suffering from the trauma of the abortion and I regretted it and recognized it as a mistake, almost immediately following (or during) the procedure. Probably before, but I felt that the clinic "Sold" the abortion to me, telling me it was easy, relatively painless, and by lying to me about the facts of how far along I was—probably two times. I believe I was probably 16-weeks along.

Jeannie,
Texas, United Sates

I was taken back to a room for an ultrasound that I was not allowed to see. After the ultrasound was done, I was sent to a clinic room where the abortion was to take place. The doctor came in after I was put on the exam table. He told me to lay back, be very still, and it would all be over soon. I asked him about medicine for the pain. He said that he was not going to give me pain meds because I would be too sleepy and not want to leave. I was afraid. The doctor started giving me injections in my cervix and then began to pry it open before it was numb. I told him to stop, but he told me to shut up or I would scare away his other patients. I began to cry from the pain. After the abortion the doctor did not say a word and everyone left the room. I knew at that point that not only what was growing inside of me had died but also with it a part of who I was.

I went home that day in a lot of pain and bleeding. Two weeks later I was in even more pain, running fever, and passing blood clots. I called the abortion clinic and told them how I was feeling; they said it was normal. I went on the Internet trying to find answers to my pain. I came across a pro-life site that had a picture of a ten week old fetus's feet. I had no idea that my baby had developed feet. That was when the truth of what I had done hit me.

A week later I walked into my doctor's office with a high fever, dizziness, and horrible pain. My doctor did an exam and ultrasound that day and found that parts of my baby were still inside of me and had caused a massive infection. I had to go in the hospital for IV antibiotics and a D&C.

I spent the next two years in and out of the hospital. I lived in constant pain. Because the infection in my uterus had not been found in time it had gone deeply into my uterus causing me to live on constant antibiotics and pain management. I had many surgeries to clean the lining of my uterus and to cut nerves to my spinal cord to reduce the pain. Nothing worked. I had nightmares of the abortion and began taking sleeping pills. I lost my job being in and out of the hospital so much. I stopped eating; I stopped living. My doctor said he did not want to do a hysterectomy because I was only 26. But in August 2004, I told my doctor that I wanted the hysterectomy. I could not take the pain any longer; I wanted my life back.

The surgery did not cure me, and the doctors finally determined that I ha[d] a bladder condition that causes pain. I became addicted to pain meds and many times

I took too many pills to escape the emotional and physical pain of my choice. I just didn't care anymore.

Cathy,
Texas, United States

The next day at the hospital, I felt like I was part of a cattle call, walking down long corridors, filling out forms, sitting in waiting rooms, and trying not to look at the other girls. Everyone kept their heads and eyes down. Although I had been told that I wouldn't feel much pain (only some pressure), it was extremely painful, and I will never in my life forget the loud horrifying sound of the suction machine taking the life out of my body I cried desperately in sorrow and pain, and the nurse held my hand, but said nothing. For some perverse reason, the doctor told me that it was a boy as if I had just delivered a baby!

Tammy,
Texas, United States

I was placed on a cold table; I remember being yelled at because I couldn't stay still or open my legs. I looked at the monitor and asked if the image was my baby. The monitor was turned away from my view. I began to cry. The nurse looked down at me [and] said, "I don't know why you are crying, this was your decision besides it was too late, the doctor has already started." I wanted to jump up and run as fast as I could, but I was frozen. I was placed in recovery [and] all you could hear were women crying and I remember thinking if this was the right thing to do then WHY was everyone crying?

Twenty-four hours later, I was rushed to the emergency room. I remember telling the doctor what

I had done, while performing the sonogram he frantically looked at the nurse and said "prep her." As I drove home the images of my baby being torn apart limb by limb and a piece of her still inside of my womb started flashing in my mind, I knew at that moment I had made the wrong decision! Guilt and self-hatred penetrated my mind and body. I was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder, had a nervous breakdown at twenty-three. At the age of twenty-eight a complete hysterectomy was ordered, no more children for me. I was blessed to have two children so I stuffed my feelings and accepted what I felt like was my punishment.

Toni,
Texas, United States

At this time I was pro-choice in my political views, but when I found myself up against that steel door that seemed better suited for a prison than a portal of liberation, I found myself decidedly pro-life. I did not think it right to tell others what they should do with their bodies. But as for myself, I did not want to have an abortion. But the events of that fateful day raced away from me. I signed in at the front desk and sat in silence with my boyfriend.

When the lady behind the window called my name, I went to the back alone, where a nurse led me down a long hall to the very last room. Once in the room, I noticed the dingy yellow walls, the tall cabinets that lined one wall, and a padded chair in the corner. The nurse gestured me to sit in the chair. But as I began to sit, immediately I broke into tears. I sprang off the chair and shouted repeatedly: "I will not do this! I have to leave! I want to go! I can't stay here!"

But she stepped in front of me, barring my escape. Clutching both my arms, the nurse forced me back into the chair. I begged and pleaded like I knew what was going to happen next: "Please don't do this to me! Please don't do this to me!"

But she pulled a needle out of her pocket and penetrated my arm. I vaguely remember feeling someone lifting me from under both arms and someone else carrying me lifting both my legs. I later awoke to the nurse's stares. Seeing my eyes open, she yelled for me to wake up and pounded her fists on my chest to keep me conscious. Groggy and unfocused, I felt someone lifting me from the chair. I tried my best to walk, but stumbled back to my waiting boyfriend. We sat for a moment, and then he carried me to the car and drove me home. I was now childless.

CONCLUSION

The Court should uphold the constitutionality of the Texas regulations at issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

SILENT NO MORE TESTIMONIES

Doreen
New York, United States

I was sitting in Planned Parenthood on the table right after I felt the warmth, comfort, and love of my baby's life trickle from my body and completely leave me. I felt my baby leave my body just as I had felt it come into my body. I felt so indescribably alone. The doctor just ducked out of the room and left me sitting there. I was clutching myself in deep spiritual and emotional pain rocking back and forth with my head raised to the ceiling chanting to myself, "Oh, God, what have I done? My Lord, my God what have I just done?" I felt myself dying inside and instantly knew why. I knew my choice was categorically wrong and I was the loser. At that moment I was terror stricken, filled with the deepest regret possible, and experiencing the reality of abortion. I had just betrayed the love of my Lord, my spirit and denied my baby life. I had really truly just killed my baby. All I wanted and wished for was to undo what I had just done. To take it all back and have a do over. Impossible! This was my choice. And now I have to live with it. I was so terrified, ashamed and angry. I felt there was no hope for me. No help for me.

The very core of my being was shaking with pure terror. I was panicked. To have your entire being shaking at the core is pure terror. A horror that I pray no other woman has to endure. My spirit withdrew

with my baby's. I was in shock and shaking with chills and numb once my baby's life dispersed from my body. The horror and terror I was feeling was completely inconceivable. Suddenly, there became no easy or quick fix to change the circumstances of my life. They had changed forever and were undeniably permanent and undeniably wrong. There was nothing to comfort me or change this now. I felt I didn't know about the consequences. I was infuriated with myself and couldn't fathom my ignorance and my denial of what an abortion actually was—the taking of my baby and God's precious gift of life. No one warned me of spiritual consequences, and I was so angry at Planned Parenthood and the right to abortion. I felt utterly deceived and lied to by Planned Parenthood for not informing me of the spiritual consequence of abortion. But I truly should have known and kept to my faith.

I was bleeding so heavily for days. It was like I was hemorrhaging. Bits and pieces of my baby's body were coming out in my underwear. I had chunks of my baby's remains in the toilet paper when I used the bathroom. Then during one shower my baby's arm came out and fell on the concrete floor of the shower. I became frozen with fear and the grim reality that my baby was dead. I couldn't bear picking it up. It was the tiniest little arm and I didn't know what to do. I couldn't even fathom picking it up to throw it away, but I just couldn't leave it there. This was one of the worst moments of my life. I felt so weak inside and repulsed at what I had done. I had taken my baby's life—a human life. I just killed my baby. I was in terror. I stood in the shower for what seemed like hours contemplating what to do. Not being able to pick up my baby's arm I finally removed the cover to the drain

and used it to push my baby's arm down the drain. I was so traumatized by what I had done. I was sickened by my choice and its harsh reality. I was sickened by what I was capable of. Most of all I was sickened that my baby was dead and that it was final. There was no escaping what I had done.

By doing this I denied my faith and my God. I really truly should have known what I was doing. I felt I didn't know. I felt so dumb and stupid—just so very stupid. I didn't know how precious God's gift of life was and took it for granted, but I found out how precious life is and how much we need to protect and respect life.

Kristen
Illinois, United States

I went into Planned Parenthood in Effingham, IL for birth control. I had to take a pregnancy test that day then again in two weeks. I remember clearly hearing someone say outside my door, "Give it to her anyways." They never said anything to me about it. Just gave me the depo shot anyways.

About two months later I found out I was pregnant. I went to work detasseling corn, and my mom needed to know my last period date, so she had my sister call and find out. They wouldn't give it to her. But I called a little later that day and [they] told me that my last pregnancy test came back positive.

They ruined my life. If it had not been for their mistake I would have been able to keep my baby. Since then I was not able to conceive a child. I believe it is because of damage done by the abortion. During the procedure, I was awake. They put some medicine

sticks in my cervix to open it, then used something that sounded like a vacuum and told me to hold still. Are you serious? It was the worst pain I have ever felt in my life. Not to mention the most traumatic. After the procedure I felt humiliated and hurt beyond belief. I always wanted kids. Not so young, but the abortion took that away. I have since gone through four cycles of invitro fertilization, three tubal pregnancies, and now a hysterectomy. I have found forgiveness from my family and that is why I am silent no more.

Sandi
New York, United States

My boyfriend and a mutual friend accompanied me to the clinic. When we arrived, it was pouring rain. There was one man standing outside, a protestor, the enemy in my book. Ms. G said they would yell and shout at me; I was afraid and nauseous at the sight of this lone man standing in the rain. As we approached him he spoke, "Please," he said, "Please don't kill your baby " His tone was kind, sad and desperate. I kept walking. I heard him say the name Jesus, I think, but by that time we were in the clinic door and, thankfully, he was no longer a threat.

The first thing they asked for at the desk was the $320 cash, which I handed over. I was glad that things were moving along and this would soon be over.

The wait was long. There were perhaps 5-7 other girls in the waiting area with me.

Finally, I was called back to a small office. There a woman had me fill out some papers, sign my name, and then she "counseled" me.

She told me my mom could be a big help in times like this. I remember thinking if I hadn't told my mom up to this point, I was certainly not going to tell her after the fact. How could I? It would upset her so much, and I couldn't bear to see my mom sad. I thought these things but never spoke aloud. I just nodded my head. She told me there would be a bill sent to my home in my name. She said the bill was for testing of the tissue. I assumed they were going to see if the cells and tissue were healthy (indeed, three months later a bill showed up. I tossed it in the trash and never received another).

She calculated how far along I was and then she led me out of the room. As we walked down the hall she turned to me with a tone of disgust and said, "Why did you wait so long!?" I was stunned. What did she mean? Ms. G told me I was 12 weeks along. At 12 weeks it wasn't a baby, it was cells, wasn't it? I was amazed at her tone and, suddenly, I was ashamed. I said, "I don't know," and we continued walking.

She led me down a sloping corridor into a small room that was packed with people. I saw three cots on wheels directly in front of me. Behind that was a small row of chairs, to the left of the chairs a privacy screen, and in front of the screen, against the far left wall, was a small station with a few nurses. Through this room I was led into a very tiny room, just big enough to fit a gynecologic exam type table with stirrups, a few portable lights, and some type of machine apparatus.

I was instructed to lie on the table with my legs in the stirrups. I was then strapped into the stirrups. I was wondering why this was necessary, but the woman left the room before I had a chance to speak. I do not think

that I would have spoken because I was too scared to ask questions.

I do not know if this tiny room had a door. If it did, they did not choose to use it. They left me there for some time, strapped to the table, my legs tied to the stirrups. Behind me, through the open door, was the room full of people I described earlier. At one point, a man who appeared to be a custodian walked into the little room I was in. I felt horrified and embarrassed to be seen by this stranger. My impression was that he was there to clean or pick up soiled linens. I felt my privacy had been violated. I also felt shame.

After some time, someone came into the room and set up an IV She told me it was for the anesthetic. She then left the room.

I didn't know when the anesthesia would take effect. Looking back, I now know they hadn't started it, but they were just getting everything ready to go.

A few minutes later a group of people came into the room.

A nurse told me to count backwards from one hundred. I began counting. I got to 96 and began to feel myself losing consciousness. I heard a woman's voice say, "She's out," and then a man's voice say. "Let's get this one over with quickly. I want to go to lunch." I felt a panic rise in me, and I heard in my mind my own voice scream "NO!" I did not trust this man. Why was he treating me this way? I then heard a loud sound, like a rumbling of an engine or generator.

The next thing I remember was the sensation of hands under my arms and legs. I heard voices. I knew they

were lifting me, and I was still trying to say "no," but I was totally helpless. I could not speak or move, and it scared me.

I opened my eyes, and I was in that crowded room. There was a woman in a cot next to me. She asked me if I was okay. She motioned over to another girl on a cot who was shaking and still unconscious. "You were doing that a minute ago; it's what happens before you wake up."

"This time," she continued, "I decided to just do the light anesthesia, so I was awake. I am sorry I did that. It was awful, I could hear the machine." I had the impression she was a prostitute. We spoke for a few minutes. She seemed like a nice person, and it felt good to talk to someone.

The nurses had me sit up. They said when I was ready, I could move to one of the seats. I forced myself to be well enough to get to the seat.

I watched the process going on in the room. The order was cot, seat, change into your street clothes, cookies and juice at the nurse's station, and then out. There was a steady stream of girls in various stages of this process. I wanted out, so as soon as I could stand, I asked for my clothes.

The walls behind the privacy screen were splattered with blood. There were pools of blood on the floor in which I made sure not to step.

After I dressed, the nurses gave me my cookies and juice. They handed me some papers, some pills, and a prescription. I think the pills were to stop bleeding. I don't remember what the script was for. They told me

to see my doctor in two weeks. Feeling weak and dizzy, I left to go home.

My immediate feeling after my abortion was relief. I didn't have to worry anymore and life could go back to normal.

After the time prescribed I went to my gynecologist. I told him I had an abortion. He asked me why I didn't come to him for help. (At the time I did not know about patient confidentiality, and I was fearful he would tell my parents.) He asked me where I had the abortion. When I told him, he looked as though he was going to cry. I was shocked by his reaction and confused as to why Ms. G would recommend a place that horrified my doctor, a highly respected and well known gynecologist.

When he examined me, he told me I had significant scarring to my uterus. He said he was hopeful it would heal well enough for me to have children one day.

About a month after the abortion, I started having pain in my groin and a yellowish discharge. I went back to the doctor and was diagnosed with a vaginal infection. Thus began a ten year odyssey of serious, almost continuous reoccurring infections, swollen lymph nodes in my groin, and pain in my ovaries and uterus.

Jules
California, United States

At 19 years old, I went into the abortion clinic to have the surgical procedure. From the consultation to the actual procedure, everyone was friendly and very informative. Lying on that table, I was having conversations about my future with the doctor and anesthesiologist. I trusted them.

As soon as I left Planned Parenthood I immediately had the worst stomach pains of my life. Four days later, I went to the emergency room because of how much I was bleeding and clotting. It turns out I had an infection. They did an ultrasound and more than 3/4 of the baby was still inside of me. I had a full uterus. The doctor informed me that if I didn't go the very next morning to have another procedure to have it removed, I could die. Planned Parenthood was supposed to remove the baby, and instead they killed the baby, left the dead body inside me, and sent me home.

It's possible that the infection will affect me having kids in the future. It's possible that I'm infertile. I don't know yet, all I know is that I am left traumatized, damaged, and heart broken by the experience I went through. And that is why I am no longer silent.

Jacquie,
Alabama, United States

We walked in and there were women sitting there that were pregnant and some that were not. I couldn't quite figure that out, but it gave me some hope thinking, perhaps, that this maybe wasn't going to happen the way he said it would. As I was sweating to fill out my paperwork I get called back, which was another red flag to me, because I was the last one to arrive but the first one to go back. A woman who said she was a "nurse" wanted to determine how old the pregnancy was. We determined that it was eleven weeks, which means everything was formed. Even her teeth were starting to form.

Before the paperwork could get finished the doctor comes in and says. "Are we ready?" I said, "No," and

she said, "Yes." I said, "But I need to finish my paperwork." He said, "Well we're ready."

So I was taken into the room and I thought, I have some hope. You have to examine what you plan to remove, correct? As I thought the examination was being done things [got] very, very painful and very intense. I kept asking him to stop. I begged him to stop. Then I finally rose up and screamed, "Please stop!" At that point the nurse pushed me down and she said, "Hold on just one more minute." The abortionist said, "Yes, just one more part."

At that point I would forget that for many, many years because as my sisters have said, you go into denial and you forget many things. It wasn't until someone said something to me about the different types and forms of abortion that I finally realized that my daughter had been dismembered piece by piece. I've learned later on that most abortuaries go back and they place the children back together, piece by piece, to account for everything, if you're lucky.

After the procedure there was no numbing of the patient. There was nothing to calm me down. Nothing. The doctor said to me, "If you have excessive bleeding you can go to the emergency room. If you have pain, you can take Tylenol, and release pain." I walked out into, what was the waiting room at that facility, my fiancé was gone, never to be seen again. I walked across the street, thinking there was a parking deck across the street, and I thought well maybe he had actually grown a conscious and maybe he's parked the car there. As I proceed to go across the street in Bethesda I collapse in the middle of the road and almost bled to death by the time the paramedics got

me. What happened then was even worse. I was admitted to the hospital. I was living a lie. I had a wedding in three weeks. I couldn't call my parents. I couldn't tell anyone. It wasn't until, literally, half my life later that I would be able to tell my parents and then be able to seek the healing that I needed at Rachel's Vineyard.

Joyce,
Maryland, United States

I made a decision to have an abortion and go into the Army. The impact of all of this is that I suffered a damaged kidney. I found out much later that half of my kidney was damaged because when I went into the military, I had this infection and the infection had gotten into the kidney, but it was the consequence of the abortion.

I did not do any follow-up from the abortion as I was told to do because I had to leave. This infection settled into my body, and into my kidney, and damaged half of my kidney. That was one of the impacts. The other impact was the thought of this abortion where it felt like a vacuum cleaner just cleaning you out. I wanted to jump off the table and they literally held me down onto the table until this thing was over. That was something I would never, ever forget.

Andrea
Pennsylvania, United States

My mother's friend, who is a registered nurse, came with us to the clinic. The baby's father came with me to the first visit. The consultation was just a bunch of paper work. There was no asking me if this was what

I wanted, or if I had second thoughts. It was just strictly how I would be paying.

I went back to see the doctor. It took me by surprise that he was a guy. They gave me an Rh shot, and he "examined" me. He told me that I was eight weeks pregnant. (The "cut off" time for abortions in their office was eight weeks. However, I knew he was lying to me because I had kept track. I didn't speak up). He didn't use a sonogram or anything to be sure; he felt inside of me and made up a number. He then made me go back out in the waiting room. I wanted to read the information in the office, but no one would allow me. They kept saying that at the age of fourteen, I was making the right "choice" and didn't need to read anything that would be "upsetting."

When I was called back, I started to cry my eyes out. I asked if my mom could come back with me, but they said that wasn't allowed. I started losing it. They took me to the "procedure" room and told me to get undressed and lie down on the table. I did. They gave me no pain killers, and I was awake for the whole thing. To help me, a nurse held my hand. From the very second the pain began, I held back my screams. He told me that I couldn't move or else I would never be able to have children again. Some screams exited my mouth from the amount of pain. The nurse put her hand over my mouth and told me to be quiet because I would scare the other patients. I squeezed the nurse's hand so tight that it started turning purple. My body had a rush of heat go through me, and then I was freezing. As he was cutting through my cervix and scrapping my uterine walls, the sounds that I heard will never leave my memory. This took about fifteen

minutes. After he was finished, I felt so sick like I had to vomit. I couldn't believe what I just had done. I wanted to stop it. God, how could I have listened to "the man I loved?"

They had me stand up, and I almost blacked out, catching myself on the stirrups. I looked down, there was my baby. The remains of my child were lying in a bucket right there for the entire world to see what I had done. It was like time stood still. That image was burned into my mind. I saw that the "clump of cells," my baby, was my son. They took me to the "recovery" room where there they gave me orange juice and stale cookies. Other women were in there as well lying down, some crying, and others just curled up in pain. After thirty minutes or so, they had me go change myself because of the blood. As I went to do so, blood just started gushing out of me. I tried to catch it with my hands, but the blood filled them up in seconds flat. It was pouring over my hands and down my legs, soaking my socks and onto the floor. I was frozen and in shock. A nurse knocked on the wall and asked if I need assistance. I said very faintly, "Oh my God, help me, please, help me, God, please help me." She came in to help me (there was only a privacy curtain), and she knocked the curtain off the wall. She let all the women there see me with my blood and my child's blood overflowing my hands. She helped clean me up, and I passed out from the loss of blood. They tried to stop the hemorrhaging, but it wouldn't let up. The nurse wrapped me in a blanket and told my mother to take me to a hospital. My mother started panicking, asking why an ambulance couldn't be called. The nurse replied, "For business purposes." We started leaving, and we were told we were not allowed to leave

through the front doors because of how I looked. We were shown the back door and left for the hospital immediately. When I arrived at the hospital, they informed me that the abortionist that I went to (Earl McLeod) had killed several women in the past for not getting them proper medical attention. They stopped the bleeding, gave me a transfusion, and discharged me. On the way home, the procedure felt like it was still going on with every bump or groove in the road that we went over. Little did I know that that pain was only the beginning.

Sandra,
Virginia, United States

At the age of 19, I became pregnant, and there was no talking about me keeping it. He told me that I had to have an abortion because I loved him and that it wasn't good for us to have it right now. He said that we couldn't afford it and that if I didn't go through with the abortion, he would leave me. I was devastated. So, in June of 1989, I went to the abortion clinic in the city and waited inside alone. He stayed out in the car and wouldn't come in with me. He said that I had to be a big girl, and to do this for US. When I walked in, the clinic felt cold and not very friendly at all. The nurses were all very nonchalant and cold. There didn't seem to be any love or concern in their attitudes. Everything felt like business. I was taken to a room upstairs where they did the procedures. I was put into a waiting room where another nurse came in and explained that this "thing" that was growing inside of me was nothing more than a "clump of cells" that had "no life" in it. From what they could tell, I was about 8 weeks along. She gave me a pill to take to help me

relax and to help start dilation. She gave me a dressing gown and told me that I needed to change and prepare for the procedure. I was asked if I needed anything, and I said no. She left.

About 15 minutes later, I was in the room with the doctor and, I was put onto this table that had stirrups on it in which to place your feet. They hooked an IV up to me and gave me something in the IV to help me to relax again and not feel pain. I remember going in and out of consciousness, but I remember hearing something that sounded like a vacuum. I felt a lot of pressure in my abdomen and I remember hearing the doctor say, "It's too big. I'm going to have to crush it to get it to suction out." I had no idea what he was talking about, but all I remember was the pain that I suddenly felt. Then it was over. They took me into a recovery room and told me to lie down because I would still be very weak from the drugs, and they needed my bleeding to slow down before I could leave. They gave me some juice because I felt extremely dizzy. She came in to check on me and said that my bleeding hadn't slowed down enough to what they had liked, but if I had someone with me, they would send me home and I could recover there. So, I walked out of the clinic by myself. When I got into my boyfriend's car, we drove home without saying anything. He didn't even look at me the whole drive back to the apartment. When we got there, I went straight to bed, and he came in and told me that he had to go to work, and that I did the right thing for US. At that moment, I didn't feel like I had done the right thing. I grieved and felt such a loss for the next several days. I felt like something tremendous had been taken away from me. The bleeding that they said was supposed to stop never did.

I ended up back in the hospital for a D and C. Apparently during my procedure, there were areas in my uterus that were bleeding from the instruments that had been used. The doctor said that if I hadn't come in, I could have bled to death. He asked me what I had done, and I told him that I had an abortion. He looked at me and just shook his head. In that moment I felt so much shame and guilt from the looks that he gave me. He gave me a prescription for pain and one to help fight infection and sent me home. There was no compassion there. After a day or so, the bleeding stopped and I was left feeling empty.

Debbie,
Indiana, United States

I was 8 weeks pregnant. I was having morning sickness and gaining weight. My boyfriend took me to Planned Parenthood. They asked me a series of questions. At the end, they said since I was unmarried, my mom wouldn't help me, my boyfriend didn't want to marry me, and that I smoked cigarettes and marijuana and drank alcohol, my only option was an abortion. They said my baby would most likely be mentally retarded or deformed due to my partying. They also said that the baby wasn't formed yet and was just cells. When I told them I was scared, they said they could give me a laminaria.

They said it wouldn't hurt at all, but it would be more money. I went out to the car to ask my boyfriend what to do and he gave me the extra money for the laminaria. I felt trapped, but I thought that maybe if I did this he would stay with me.

That night I started praying and decided to try to cancel the abortion. I called Planned Parenthood's emergency number and talked to a nurse who said that I would miscarry because of the laminaria, so I had to go through with it. Years later I found out from watching an ex-abortion doctor's video that they lied, and that I could have safely had the laminaria taken out and kept my baby.

My mom took me the day of the abortion. I couldn't quit shaking from the fear. The Planned Parenthood nurse gave me a valium but I was not put to sleep. I was awake and alert through the whole thing. I remember the pain like a knife in my stomach and the sounds of the machine, and I remember the doctor yelling at me not to move. The medical assistant came running in after they took the bottle holding the contents of my baby out of the room. I asked what happened and she said that the bottle had broken. She didn't know what to do because she couldn't piece the baby back together. I remember feeling shocked and I asked if she knew the sex of my baby! They took me to the recovery room and I remember all the girls there with glazed looks and crying. Immediately afterward I felt shock that it was over. I felt some relief but also a deep sadness and emptiness which I numbed out.

Tonya,
Florida, United States

I had an abortion in 2001. I was eighteen and heavily influenced by my mother. She took me to the clinic on 12th and Delaware in Fort Pierce, FL. We waited in the clinic together, but she knew I was very hesitant. We had to wait for a while for the abortionist to come. I don't think he even lived in the area. The nurse said

he would be coming through the back door with a sheet over his head.

When he finally arrived, I was given something to calm me down. After taking something that made me feel a little "out there," I realized that my Mother was nowhere in sight. I asked the nurse to get her but was told she left to get coffee and would be back when everything was over. She also told me that she was glad that I wasn't talking about God and that there were no "Jesus freaks" here today. I had also been told earlier that my child was "not a baby yet," and I was denied the right to see my ultrasound.

When I was taken to the room to have the procedure, I remember thinking, this does not look like a place anyone should be having surgery. Now as a Respiratory Therapist, I know there was absolutely no emergency medical equipment. Just a bed with stirrups and a suction machine for extracting my baby.

There was one very nice young nurse there that didn't say much but held my hand during the death of my child. I remember thinking that I did not deserve such comfort. When I sat up, I saw bloody babies in a Tupperware bowl on the counter. Afterwards I was taken back to a little room with a recliner. I was shaking uncontrollably. My mother was not called until the shaking stopped, and I looked more presentable.

I had severe bleeding and a stabbing pain for weeks after. I notified the clinic of the symptoms, and they were not interested in hearing about it. They told me to go to the ER. The problem was, I did not know the

exact procedure done to me and did not know how to tell the ER what I had done. I was ashamed.

Jennifer,
Massachusetts, United States

I had an abortion when I was 27, and my life has never been the same. I knew it was wrong, even though I was not religious at the time. I justified it, and my boyfriend (now husband) encouraged it. I was very sick with Lyme's disease at the time and could barely walk so I told myself that the baby would be sick with all the antibiotics. The day of the abortion I wanted someone to stop me. I felt like I was going to my execution. I couldn't stop crying and shaking and I couldn't look at my boyfriend. I went to a very "nice" looking doctor's office in San Francisco, but once I got into the procedure room I felt like they were treating me like a criminal. I told them the painkillers they had given me weren't working, but they proceeded anyway. I shook uncontrollably and cried the whole time. When I got home I lay on the couch and cried the rest of the day.

Jenn,
Oregon, United States

I'll never forget walking into the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in Syracuse, NY. It was a huge, cold waiting room. My boyfriend had paid the $300.00 fee and immediately left me there by myself. He told me to call him when it was done. I felt so alone and scared as I filled out the paperwork that they gave me. Keep in mind, I was 17 at the time and was not accompanied by my parents. It's the same today as back then no questions asked, no matter the age. No parental consent need be given. After filling out the paperwork,

I was taken into a room and made to watch a short video about what my abortion would be like. I can only describe this video as wishful thinking, because it bared little resemblance to the actual invasive procedure I was about to have.

I was let into a very cold, small room and told to undress and put on the paper gown they supplied me with. After a few minutes the "doctor" came in, sits at a chair at my feet and just starts. He did not say one word to me. The nurse that was there grabbed my arms and started holding me down. All of a sudden, I felt a hot, searing pain and I saw STARS! I gasped as the "doctor" shoved a needle into my cervix. He said to me " stay still! It doesn't hurt! It's all in your head! Let me FINISH!" I remember that the nurse still had me pinned down and I just wanted to jump up and run out the door, but I could not move. The pain was indescribable, as was the feeling of helplessness I felt. No one was there to help me. All I remember after that was pressure and extreme pain. I know I was crying. The "doctor" just rolled his eyes at me afterward and said it was finished. I got dressed and was just numb as I walked out the door. No after procedure instructions were given. No follow up appointments made. They got their money and now would have nothing else to do with their patient.

After getting back home, I just went to my room and cried myself to sleep. I was cramping very bad and it was the worst period I have ever had. I remember globs of tissue and blood pouring out. After a few days it subsided and I went about my life again. A few weeks later when my cycle did not come around again, I went to a clinic doctor and he informed me that I was

STILL PREGNANT! I was floored. I could not even comprehend what he was saying to me. This could not be happening it just couldn't.

After that, I was unable to get another abortion it was too late. I was relieved, but also knew I was not able to care for a child. I still had to finish high school, and then college. I had the baby well, actually, BOTH babies. You see, I had been pregnant with TWINS. I lost one at birth, the other I gave up for adoption. She was beautiful. They BOTH were. That was the hardest thing I have ever done, giving her up, but I loved her so much I had to. I named the babies Jessica and Sarah. Jessica was adopted.

Connie,
Wisconsin, United States

The clinic was very cold and dreary They did not tell me that this blob of tissue, as it was referred to, was a baby with a heart beat or explain the risks involved; the possibility of an infection or perhaps never being able to have another baby. The nurse who assisted the doctor never smiled or gave a comforting touch or word. The doctor briefly explained the procedure, telling me there would be a sucking sound like a vacuum cleaner. He said there would be no pain. It was over just like that, my baby was pulled from my body. I went home and lay on the couch in the dark wondering what had I done! A few days later my doctor told me I had an infection in my uterus as a result of the abortion.

Sandy,
Wisconsin, United States

In April, 1975 I had an abortion done at the university hospital in Madison, WI. The abortion was done

against my will and heart's desire. I was 16 yrs. old at the time and my parents had been separated a year and going through a divorce. The abortion was done as my father was afraid if anyone else found out that I was pregnant, he would lose custody of my brother and me. We would then have to go to live with my mother. My mother conceived me before marriage and I was her reason she got married. Thus, she counseled me to get an abortion and not ruin my life. I felt so ashamed of myself, I felt panic, confusion, fear and after I bargained with God, and the disbelief settled; I got my courage up and shared the news with my boyfriend. He wanted to get married, but we both felt we were too young. We decided we would make a plan, to place the baby for adoption. We went to Planned Parenthood in Milwaukee, thinking they were there to help make plans for being a parent. We thought we could get more information on adoption. We were so surprised that the information we were looking for, Planned Parenthood didn't share with us but instead recommended abortion.

I left feeling very unsupported and wanting no part of what she was suggesting. We begged my dad for the longest time to reconsider. Finally the day came that he was driving me to the hospital. I remember going in for the procedure and lying on [a] table in this cold sterile metal furnished room. I remember the nurse telling me how they would pass a long needle into my abdomen to exchange the amniotic fluids with the saline solution. I remember the doctor inserting the needle and my leg jumped and hit a tray of instruments near the bottom of the table I laid on. It sent all their instruments flying. The doctor cursed me and told me not to move again or I could cause

problems with my uterus. I told him that I didn't want to be here or have the abortion done! He told me that my parents brought me here for this to be done and so this is what they were going to do.

After it was finished, I remember going back out to where my boyfriend and parents were waiting. I broke down and sobbed. More than a medical procedure happened. I felt like I had died from the inside out. After the procedure we went back to my hospital room to wait till the solution caused me to go into labor and my baby to be aborted. I was instructed that when I felt pressure developing I was to bear down with my abdomen and not sit up but to ring for the nurse to come. I remember clinging to a little stuffed animal the whole time I went through the aborting labor, alone with no one else around.

Peggy,
Tennessee, United States

I was prepped, drugged with valium and then felt a very long and horribly painful cramp as I heard a vacuum cleaner sound. I remember sobbing as I dozed off. Then I was awakened, got dressed, and my husband drove me home.

I lied about it, rationalized and justified it for twenty six years. But, the abortion not only killed my innocent baby, it damaged me physically, mentally and spiritually. Because of the physical damage done to my uterus from the suction curettage abortion, I had to have a hysterectomy three months later.

Kelly,
Georgia, United States

I am speaking to you today because abortion, in so many ways, changed my life forever. I had two abortions ten years ago because I was already a divorced single mom who didn't want her Christian parents to know she was sleeping with her boyfriend. I remember every sight, sound and smell in the clinic. I felt like a number rushed in and out and treated with indifference. I suffered for months after the second abortion until doctors discovered I had an incomplete abortion and there were still parts of my child inside of me.

Kim,
Mississippi, United States

I never met the doctor. I was told by Planned Parenthood to bring loose fitting clothes. After the procedure, I was cautioned that I could hemorrhage and was explained the signs of infection.

I was in college. My boyfriend drove me from Starkville to Memphis; neither of us said very much on the way there, I just watched the trees as we drove. On the way back I was sick, frightened, cramping and in great emotional pain. I couldn't speak; I just stared out of the window as tears flooded down my face knowing that I had killed my child.

After a sedative and being strapped to the exam table I said, "I can't do this, let me up." After that, I was forcefully held down by two people and given another sedative this time and [an] injection in the vein in my hand. I put my legs together and heard the doctor tell his assistant to do something about that; they held my

legs apart and I begged and called for my boyfriend. Today, I know that he never heard my screams. The doctor started the procedure and I felt pain and could hear the suction noise. I felt sick and could feel the hot tears flowing down my face. I just wanted to die.

Mary,
Florida, United States

I had an abortion because I was in an abusive relationship. I had been beaten by my boyfriend and he threatened my life multiple times. He threatened to take our child away from me and send the child to Morocco with his family. I experienced verbal, physical, emotional, social and financial abuse in this relationship. I experienced going through a domestic violence victim's program. I had experienced abuse and abandonment in my family. My brother sexually abused me, as well as another family member. I was accustomed to being treated terribly and thought this was normal.

During the abortion experience, I felt as if the staff at the Orlando clinic was not concerned about my welfare. No one asked me if my life was in danger even though my boyfriend was cursing at me in the clinic. During the procedure I was extremely cold and uncomfortable. With the nurse and doctor, it was just business as usual. The nurse told me everything would be alright. The doctor didn't even talk to me or look at me. I was crying violently during the procedure as I felt my child being ripped out. I was told to be quiet and given extra pain medication to sleep.

Terri,
Wisconsin, United States

It was a day in late August 1980. At the clinic, they asked me why I was choosing abortion. I felt that I wasn't "choosing" abortion at all; I felt like I didn't have a choice. The room was cold and for a minute I think I convinced myself I was just going in for a pap. They told me I would have some cramps, I would hear the suction machine, and then it would all be over. I remember being scared out of my mind and wanting to leave, but I couldn't. I had to go through with this. I remember the nurse holding my hand as I started to cry and I realized that it wasn't my insides that were being sucked out of me, but my baby. I wanted it to stop. Not only did my baby die that day, but deep down inside, so did I.

In the waiting room afterwards, they gave me juice and cookies, like I had just given blood or something. I remember thinking, "I just killed my baby and I get juice and cookies for a reward." It made me sick inside. I couldn't get out of there fast enough. I just wanted to get drunk and stoned to kill the pain in my body and soul. I ended up on a street corner, screaming and crying out to God to forgive what I had done. But I knew God couldn't forgive this one—this was the unforgivable sin. At least that's what I thought.

I bled for two months afterwards, ending up in the hospital with a D&C. Sometimes an abortion is not complete and parts of the baby can be left inside, causing hemorrhaging. I know this is exactly what happened to me. A year later, I was diagnosed with endometriosis. With the realization that I may never

have another child, I believed this was God's punishment for what I had done.

Renee,
Illinois, United States

Once inside, I gave the receptionist a fake name. I felt numb. I filled out paper work, talked to a counselor, talked to a nurse, and tried not to think about what I was doing. A nurse escorted me into the abortion room. She helped me get ready for the procedure and just asked me vague questions about the weather and if I was going to school. The abortionist came into the room and began my abortion. The nurse was leaning over me and staring into my eyes. After a little while, she asked the doctor, "Is something wrong?" He said, "It is trying to get away—I've tried three times!"

I was shocked!! What he said hit me like a ton of bricks. It is trying to get away! I started to pray and ask God to stop all this from happening—to not let it work—to let it fail—to put His hand in the way of the vacuum. I couldn't believe what I was doing!! Seconds later, the abortionist said, "It's done." He put away his tools and left the room. From that moment on I have REGRETTED MY ABORTION! I just wanted to run, to die I was ANGRY! After the nurse left the room, I started to cry. A part of me died in that room. I knew what I did was wrong. The "IT" he was referring to was MY BABY!

Lilian,
Alabama, United States

I made my appointment and went to my local Planned Parenthood for my abortion. I was in the waiting room where other girls were waiting for their appointments.

The mood was solemn and sad. Everyone knew what they were about to do. For whatever reasons, all of us were there because we felt we were backed into a corner. Eventually, they took me to a room. After waiting in the room a while, I began to have second thoughts. Being brought up a Christian, I knew this was very wrong. I feared that if I had the baby, not only would my boyfriend be tied to me for life, but he may abuse the baby as well. How could I put a child through his abusive tirades?

I had to wait a long time in that sterile plain room to get ready for the abortion. The workers were very ineffectual and not very nice at all; they almost threw the paper gown at me. A nurse entered the room to prepare me for the abortion and I told her I was having second thoughts. She said, "OK, I will tell the doctor." When the doctor came and I told him I had second thoughts, he said nothing to me; he just pulled out a syringe filled with something from his lab coat pocket and injected me. I lost consciousness for a while, when I came to, the procedure was already underway.

I was numb and unable to move, but I kept repeating over and over again, "I changed my mind, I changed my mind."

The doctor had a devilish look of enjoyment on his face as he ripped my baby apart. As he worked, he said to me, "This is best for you and I need a new hot tub for my new home." I couldn't believe it when he said such a thing. My head was spinning and I went numb from the shock of what was happening to me. All I could think about was how I could ever atone for the murder of my child. I heard the sucking of the machine as he

worked. I swear I could hear my baby's soul crying as it was torn apart.

I finally woke up completely and when I said that I had changed my mind, they told me that I asked for a sedative which made me hallucinate. It was not a hallucination and I never asked for a sedative. Those awful people forced me to have an abortion against my will. The minute I expressed any doubts about my abortion, they took steps to make sure they got my money from me.

Kathy,
Ohio, United States

When I began to fear the worst, I went back to Planned Parenthood where the pregnancy test confirmed that I was indeed pregnant. The Planned Parenthood worker suggested I schedule an abortion the next day as the doctor still had an opening. I remember feeling trapped and panicky as I moved into a crisis mode. The PP worker assured me that I could talk to a "counselor" the next day about my concerns. It also quickly became clear that my relationship itself hung in the balance if I did not "choose" abortion. Again, the standard party line given by pro-choice advocates as to why women get abortions are not even close. In underscoring the dynamics of "choice" surrounding abortion, Frederica Mathewes-Green captured the truth: "Women don't want an abortion like they want an ice cream cone or a Porsche. They want an abortion like an animal caught in a trap wants to gnaw off its own leg to escape. Abortion is a tragic attempt to escape a desperate situation by an act of violence and self-loss." By the time I arrived at the clinic the next morning, I was paralyzed with fear. My "counselor"

collected my $200 cash, asked a few questions, and assured me everything would be fine. She reiterated that this was a good choice for me as an unmarried woman only six or seven weeks pregnant. My "counseling" session lasted less than five minutes. No one ever said a word to me that day about the baby and I quickly found myself in a room with a doctor I'd never met, who knew nothing about me (including my complete medical history, I might add), and who said nothing to me. It had barely been 24 hours between the time I found out I was pregnant and the time my first child was destroyed. I was numb.

However, I also felt a huge surge of relief that no one would find out I'd ever been pregnant. Yet just one week later, I was in the hospital for surgery to correct the complications from my "safe and legal" earlier abortion. No one ever told me about that risk.

Nine years later I ended up with a tubal pregnancy that was rupturing, which obviously not only ended that baby's life, but also resulted in the removal of my fallopian tube and my ovary. No one ever told me about that risk either.

Mary,
Virginia, United States

My sister took me to a clinic and dropped me off. I was so scared. I checked in and did as they asked. I filled out the paperwork and then sat there all alone. I was called into a treatment room and told to undress and get on the cold table. In a few minutes, a doctor came in to examine me. He was very rough. It was very uncomfortable due to the severity of the STD. As he jammed his hand into my vagina, I tightened up. He

then meanly said to me, "You have a bad attitude. I'm here to help you." As he walked to the door he turned to me and said, "Do you want my help or not?" So I said, "Yes. I need your help." He completed the examination and I laid as still as I could without moving until he was done. He then just walked out the door and slammed it behind him.

I got up and put my clothes on. I was told to go sit in the hallway on a wooden bench. They informed me that I would be able to speak with a counselor, before I made the decision, in the event I wanted to change my mind. As I sat there, I was convinced that this was not what I wanted to do. I was going to tell the counselor just as soon as I could that this was NOT what I wanted to do. In what seemed to be an eternity, I was called by a nurse into an exam room. They put me on the table and began to start the procedure. I recall, that as I lay there, I could hear the nurses talking. One of them said, "Who is this?" And the other nurse said, "Mary J-s." She replied, "There must be two Mary J-s here." The other replied, "Oh well, just go ahead and do it while she's here."

Lena,
Florida, United States

I remember feeling horrible immediately. The pain was in my lower body and it was very intense. A short while later, I was escorted to the back door which led to the parking lot. My mother waited for me there. As I rode in the passenger seat of my mother's car out of the driveway, I recall making eye contact with a person who was holding a sign and walking in front of the abortion mill. It was too late for me and for my child.

One week later, I found myself in no better condition. I had been running a serious fever of nearly 105 degrees for almost the entire week. I was living at my boyfriend's parents' home at the time, and his mother took notice of my condition. Thanks to her persistence, I finally allowed her to take me to a walk-in clinic. She was sure there was something really wrong with me.

At the clinic, there was panic and I was immediately taken to the hospital.

Eight days after having my abortion, I was admitted to the hospital and put in the intensive care unit. During my first two days there, I worsened, despite broad spectrum IV antibiotics. My family was told that I could die.

My body was shutting down, due to major infection from septic abortion. I had acute pyelonephritis, sepsis, pneumonia and presumed congestive heart failure.

I was attached to a heart machine and I had a tube in my throat so I could breathe.

Because my condition was getting worse and worse, I had to have emergency surgery in the middle of the night. My body was so swollen, I was told that I looked like I was nine months pregnant. During my emergency surgery, 300 cc of bloody peritoneal fluid was removed from my body. How I survived this is truly a miracle.

Billie,
California, United States

My husband did not make any objections and in fact set the appointment up at Planned Parenthood. We went in the afternoon because it was more efficient for him to be able to work beforehand.

I will never forget how humiliated I felt and how the person (I assume she was a nurse) made me feel. When she was examining me she said, "You're not pregnant"! I just looked at her with disbelief. She was rough in her behavior and really lacked as a "professional." I remember saying that I was pregnant and she should have someone else check. She did and they concurred with me.

I was told to go into the other room and change my clothes and they gave me a pill to take. Vaguely, I remember going into another room and getting onto [a] table much like an exam table. The doctor made comment on my name and that it reminded him of a dancer. It was, I thought in poor taste especially since I was in the position that I was in. I remember very little from that point with the exception of what I thought was a dream.

Diana,
Pennsylvania, United States

The second abortion was in a clinic in Indianapolis and I was awake throughout. I can still hear that awful sucking machine and the doctor's voice saying, "I'm trying to get it all." IT? IT? I felt a deep agony overcome me. That "IT" was my baby.

I was never more alone or scared in my life. All the women in the recovery area were very quiet, except one. The woman was crying loudly and I will remember her to my dying day. Many of the women refused to look at anyone. I was feeling numb and detached by now. I felt like I was watching a horror show.

My physical symptoms began at once; I couldn't stop vomiting or bleeding for a long time. I had infection after infection. I kept thinking why didn't someone tell me what would happen to me. I was not told that I would be so ill. It was ongoing vomiting and bleeding for a month. I felt like I was dying.

The months following the abortion were very traumatic. I had infection after infection in my womb. It was ongoing and never ending illness.